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First name: Pamela

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I have worked in Iran, where it is said that desert lands were once forested, and in Indonesia where, among burnt stumps of former rain forest, an occasional skeletal tree held remains of an orangutan sleeping nest. Peat soils burned for months emitting stored CO₂, diminishing water supplies, polluting streams and rivers. The burn's purpose was to clear land for a monoculture of oil palms. Climate change, mass extinctions, desertification have led us to understand that commercial economic products are not the primary value of forests.

We think of National Forests as being maintained to provide wood products for human use, but these national lands have some of the few remaining large stands of contiguous forest where remnant native ecosystems exist. These forests provide products essential to all life, including our own, in the form of clean water, air, flood control, water reserves, pollinators, soil microorganisms, fish, amphibians, birds, and large mammals, for example. Forests can be keepers of biodiversity, which the world is rapidly losing. With each extinction, all life is slightly less stable. Protection of natural resources may be the greatest service National Forests provide. Efforts to protect plant and animal species while maintaining and extracting trees is of utmost importance,

Fossil fuel production and extraction in NF should be banned. Understanding the pollution these products contribute to climate change has led to alternate energy sources becoming available. Mineral prospecting and extraction require road building and motorized machinery, causing disturbance to the land. Disruption can even extend to communities outside of the forest boundary but dependent on forest ecosystem services, such as clean water. Therefore, thorough research is required for permitting any mineral extraction in the forest.

While forest service roads are necessary for maintenance, roads or trails for recreation, other than walking, bicycling, nature study, or biology education, are not appropriate. Motorized vehicles compact the ground and remove vegetation exposing the soil to erosion. The resulting pollution harms plants and animals and interferes with experiences people enjoy in forests: listening for birdsong, wind in the trees, smelling new growth emerging through organic soils, and spotting forest animals. Motors bring to the forest the very things that differentiate forest from highways and cities.

Fire should be used only with care and for particular purposes. Some maintenance to provide a variety of habitats is necessary. Formerly successional stages were maintained by natural forces such as fire, beaver, natural river meanders, which created ponds, marshes, meadows, and woodland. Now the Forester must plan where and how to provide habitat diversity and protect fragile ecosystems. Fire may bring back former inhabitants of limestone glades, but also can consume leaf layers and fallen branches that protect soil and soil animals.

Smoke from fires pollutes and can be harmful to animal habitats. For example, regarding bat conservation in Ozark St. Francis NF, the proposed plan reduces protections for bats by changing wording concerned with

roosting, hibernating, and nursery areas. The present preferable "No Action" plan states: "Prescribed burn plans will be written to avoid active combustion and smoldering phase smoke from entering these sites when bats are present.. ." The wording in the Proposed plan replaces the word avoid with minimize. The term minimize allows for various interpretations of the amount of smoke and fire permissible. Instead, the strongest protections for the health of bats should be followed. Bats around the world are in trouble. It will not only be sad but dangerous to human health when they are no longer fluttering through night skies feeding on mosquitos and other nite flying insects.

Herbicides, still under debate as to their longterm effects on the environment and on humans, should be used only to prevent the spread of non-native invasive species, not as a substitute for mowing or mechanical weeding. Non-native invasive species are one of the five major causes of biodiversity loss.

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and selling of carbon sequestering credits can provide new economic value to the FS.

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